

other a long time. And you know Netanyahu and Arafat, they're both real strong-willed, hard-headed guys, right, and they're not supposed to get along.

And you think about the wreckage all of that estrangement has wrought. And you think, God, maybe it will be different now. And here are these people who reached across this divide and decided they'd hold hands and jump off this high dive together. And it makes you feel bigger, doesn't it? It makes you feel more alive. It gives you energy. It gives you hope. It sort of chips away all those layers of cynicism that we carry around encrusted on us all the time. Why? Because it's just the opposite of the murder of young Mr. Shepard. It reaffirms our common humanity. That's why we like it.

Now, what's that got to do with this election and Barbara Boxer? I'll tell you what. I made a decision to run for President in 1991 because I thought that we were not doing what we should do to prepare for this new century; because I wanted everybody to have an opportunity to live up to the fullest of their God-given abilities; because I wanted our country to be a better force for peace and freedom and prosperity for other people, as well ourselves; because I wanted America to be one community across all these various lines that divide us and all the crazy ways we're cut up; and because I thought Washington was a place where people were more interested in politics and power than in people and progress. And I thought the rhetoric coming out of there sounded like a broken record that gave me a headache. And I have done my best for 6 years to reconcile the American people to each other, to move this country forward, to bring it together, to make the world a better place.

In all that, I have succeeded more than I have succeeded in changing the dominant rhetoric and modus operandi of Washington. But Lord knows I have tried. And if we had a few more people like Barbara Boxer, then we could produce more days in Washington which would make you feel the way you did when you saw Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat up there saying, "Oh Lord, I don't know if I can do this, but I'm going to take a big leap and try."

I'm telling you, if you look at the people in this room, you will come in contact with tens of thousands of people, directly or indirectly, maybe millions if you do the Net, between now and election day. I thank you for your money. We'll put it up on the air. But you can have an even bigger impact if you don't let one person go without looking them in the eye and telling them their country needs them to show up on November 3rd.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to actress Barbra Streisand, who introduced the President; dinner hosts Bob Daly and Carole Bayer Sager; musician Carole King; Senator Boxer's husband, Stuart, their son, Doug, their daughter, Nicole and her husband, Tony Rodham, and their grandson, Zachary Rodham; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

### **Remarks at a Luncheon Honoring Senator Barbara Boxer in San Francisco, California**

*October 25, 1998*

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your wonderful welcome, I'm delighted to be here with so many great supporters of Barbara Boxer. I want to thank Mark and Susie and my longtime friend Dick Fredericks, all the others who are responsible for this event today.

I am delighted to see Senator Cranston here, and thank you, sir. And I'm so glad that Gray Davis was able to come—another way station on his way to victory in a few days.

You know, I have had a great time at this event listening to other people speak, first of all because, believe it or not, I'm a little afraid to speak today because I still haven't had much sleep since the end of those peace talks. And I gave a couple speeches for Barbara yesterday in southern California, and I told everyone that before I got off the plane—my staff gives me these typewritten things, see, like this, and I always ignore them; I just stand up there and talk. So because I was up for 39 hours in a row at the end of the Middle East peace talks, and then

had to come out here, and my system is a little—you know, I mean, I'm 52 years old. [Laughter] And I didn't even do that in college. So my staff said, "Please read the cards today." [Laughter]

And then Hillary called me to tell me to tell Barbara hello and to say how sorry she was she wasn't here. And she said, "Better read those cards today." [Laughter] So I've got these cards up here; I'll do my best to do it.

So the first thing is I'm tired. But secondly, you know the people who spoke before me, in image and in substance, to me represent the best of the party that I'm proud to belong to, the State that has been so good to me that I have seen come back from the doldrums once again to lead America and the world toward the future, and the country that we all love so much.

I want to thank Art Torres for his leadership of this party. I want to thank Dianne Feinstein for her strong leadership, for standing up for the assault weapons ban and helping us to protect the Mojave and doing a dozen other things of great value to this country. I want to thank Nancy Pelosi for her steadfast support for education and health care, for women's rights, for human rights around the world, and for her wonderful friendship to me. And then Barbara gave this marvelous speech. I mean, weren't you proud of all of them? Didn't you feel better just listening to them all speak? I mean, it was great, wasn't it? [Applause]

I sort of feel like that old saw that everything that needs to be said has already been said, but not everyone has said it yet. [Laughter] And so you have to endure one more speech. But I'd like to, if I might, put the stakes of this election into some larger perspective for you. That's one of my jobs as your President, to try to tell you where I think the big picture is.

When I came to California first in 1991 as a candidate and I asked the people here to support me, I did it because I felt that our country was not doing what we should to prepare for the 21st century. And I said, I want you to vote for me, even though I come from one of those little places Dianne Feinstein was talking about. I spent 12 years as a Governor trying to keep money from

going to California, you know? [Laughter] And I spent 6 years as President trying to make it up to you, and I think you're net ahead on the deal, I think. [Laughter]

But anyway, I said, look, this is the America I dream of. I want us to go into this new era, where every person—every person—without regard to the circumstances of his or her birth, has a chance to live up to their God-given abilities. I want to live in a country that is still the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity, not just for ourselves but for others as well. I want America not just to become more diverse in the census statistics but in the daily lives of our people. I want us to relish the differences between us and still grow closer together as a genuine community.

And for 6 years I've worked for this. And I believe we're closer to those goals than we were 6 years ago. And one of the reasons is that I have had people who would help pursue these goals, people like the three Members of Congress who spoke here today. If any one of them—any one of them—had been replaced in Congress in 1993 by a member of the opposite party, if we'd had one less vote for our economic program, it would not have passed. That economic program reduced the deficit by 93 percent before the bipartisan balanced budget bill passed in 1997. It sparked a huge boom in investment, a big drop in interest rates. It also had more money for everything from education to the environment to research. And they were there.

Barbara Boxer was there. She had a tough race in '92; she could have taken a dive. But if she had taken a dive, then California would not have been able to rise. She didn't take a dive, and California ought to stick with her on November 3d.

We have worked to prove you can grow the economy and improve the environment. We've worked for cleaner air, cleaner water, safer food, fewer toxic waste dumps. Barbara worked especially for special safety standards for children. And it's worked. But every year it's a battle. We still, every year, have to fight people who believe that the only way to grow the economy is to, alas, damage the environment more, when all the evidence is that with the new technologies available today we can

actually accelerate economic growth if we make an intelligent commitment to the preservation and improvement of the environment. That's a huge issue for California.

This is not some casual thing. If you want 33 million, 35 million, 40 million people to be able to live here, all different kinds of people elbow-to-elbow, with all the diversity you have—you want the people who serve this meal to have their children grow up without asthma, just as well as those who paid the full ticket price to come today—then California has to lead the way on the environment. Barbara Boxer has stood up for the environment and for the health of California's children, and California should stand up for Barbara Boxer on election day.

I could give you a lot of other examples, but let me just say, in this budget negotiation that we just went through, it is the time of maximum opportunity for the members of our party, because even though we're in the minority in the House and Senate now—I hope only for a few more days—and we have the White House, we don't have enough numbers to pass bills unless Republicans join with us.

And in a funny way that's as it should be. We ought to have, basically, people in both parties who are willing to work with each other in good faith. We had a few who would work with us to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco, but they had enough to beat us. We had a few who would work with us to raise the minimum wage, but they had enough to beat us. We had a few who would work with us to reform the campaign finance reform laws, but they had enough to beat us. We had a handful, even, who stood up to the health insurance lobby and wanted to help us with the Patients' Bill of Rights, but they had enough to beat us.

But when we got to the budget, as long as they stood with me, then if they wanted a budget and they wanted the Government to go on, and they wanted to be able go home and campaign and take advantage of the fact that they had defeated campaign finance reform, they defeated the effort to protect our kids from the dangers of tobacco and did what the health insurance companies wanted on the Patients' Bill of Rights, then they had to listen to us.

And so for the first time in history, in a Congress where the majority really did not want to do it, we got 100,000 teachers in the early grades to lower class size to an average of 18. We got that after-school money Barbara Boxer talked about, and she brought it to the Congress. She did it. And it will mean that 250,000 more kids who live on mean streets in tough neighborhoods with parents that don't get off work until 7 or 8 o'clock at night will be able to stay after school.

I have seen what this can do with my own eyes. In Chicago, where I was the other day, there are now 40,000 children who get 3 square meals a day in the schools. And guess what? Learning levels have gone up, and juvenile crime has done down. This is not rocket science. These children need support; they need something positive to do. And they can learn, and they can grow, and they can flourish.

And because of Barbara Boxer, that's a part of our budget. She stood up for the poorest of California's children, so they could make the richest contribution to California's future, and you ought to stand up for her on election day because of that as well.

We also had the best legislative session for the high-tech industry in California, I believe, ever in history. They had six or seven bills up there; we passed them all at the end. And she supported them, and they shouldn't forget it.

I could go on and on and on. She's talking about going to the Central Valley. Farmers have been hurt worse than anybody else in America so far by the Asian economic crisis. So we declared an emergency and went in to provide some help for people who don't deserve to go out of business because the financial system's gone haywire half a world away. And she helped me do that.

The Congress took 8 months to do it, but finally, when the budget time came, we finally got America's contribution to the International Monetary Fund, which is essential if you want me to help lead the world away from the financial crisis in Asia, if you don't want it to spread to Latin America, if you want America's economic growth to keep going.

So for all those reasons, she deserves to be reelected. But more important is what

we're going to do in the future. What is our message in this election? Our message is that Washington ought to be about the business of America and its future and its children. Our message is, okay, we've got 100,000 teachers; now let's provide the tax incentives within our balanced budget to build or repair 5,000 schools so we'll have the classrooms for the teachers to teach in. Our message is, okay, we beat back the ill-advised election year tax cut to squander the surplus this year and for all years to come; but next year we have to actually save Social Security for the 21st century. And we have to do it in a way that protects the universal coverage of Social Security that has lifted half the seniors in this country out of poverty. But we have to do it in a way that does not overly burden our children and our grandchildren when the baby boomers retire. This is a huge decision. Voters should focus on this.

Why were we trying to save the surplus to save Social Security? Because we know if we make modest changes now we can preserve Social Security in the 21st century. And we know that we can do it in a way that brings our country together. Now, if we don't do it and we wait until people like me retire—and we know not everybody will have as good a pension as I do. [*Laughter*] You laugh about it; it's a serious thing. We've done a lot, by the way—and Barbara and Dianne and Nancy voted for every single initiative—we have done a lot to make it easier for people of modest means to save for their own retirement. It's very important. But half the seniors in the country today would be in poverty were it not for Social Security.

Now, when the baby boomers retire, there will be two people working for every one person drawing. We have basically three choices. We can deal with this now when we've got a projected surplus for many years to come, make some modest changes, not be afraid of the political heat, join together, and do what's right. Or we can wait until the wheel starts to run off, in which case we will have one of two choices, both bad. We can simply lower the standard of living of our seniors if they don't have good pensions and say, "I'm sorry." Or if that bothers our conscience too much, we can, by that time, have a whopping tax increase to maintain a system that

is unsustainable in ways that lower the standard of living of our children and their ability to raise our grandchildren.

So Barbara Boxer stood up for me to save that surplus. And that's why we did it, because we waited 29 years to go from red ink to black, and we wanted to use the money first to take care of this enormous problem that defines who we are as a people. So she has voted to save Social Security first. She deserves a chance to be voting on how to save it. And we're going to do that next year, and that's another reason she should be elected.

So building the classrooms for the kids to be in smaller classes in, saving Social Security, the Patients' Bill of Rights—you've heard us talking about it, but let me remind you what it says. It says, if you're in an HMO, that's good. Care ought to be managed. But the doctor, not the accountant, ought to make the health care decision. You ought to be able to see a specialist if the doctor says you should. If you get hurt in an accident, you ought to go to the nearest emergency room, not one clear across town. If your employer changes health care providers while you're in the middle of a treatment, chemotherapy, or you're pregnant, or there is some other extended treatment, you should be able to finish the treatment before you have to be forced to change doctors. And your medical records ought to be kept private.

This is a big deal. I am telling you, we have tried for one year to pass this. And I need a few more folks like Barbara Boxer in the United States Congress, not fewer, if you want the Patients' Bill of Rights, if you want the schoolrooms, and if you want Social Security saved.

We also have got to figure out what to do to deal with the challenges of the global financial system now, and I intend to spend—I've already been up working on that this morning. We need people, in short, who care about every individual citizen in every community, in every neighborhood in this State, but also understand we can only fulfill our responsibilities to them unless we do right in the larger world.

No State has benefited as much as California from our growing involvement in the global economy. No State should understand

more clearly, with the diversity of your own population, how essential it is on the one hand to give every child a hand up and to reward the labor of every person, but also to reach out to the rest of the world.

And I'll leave you with this one final thought. I want you to ask yourself this question: Why did you clap so much when the speakers said the nice things they did about the Middle East peace accord? And my role in it was really your role in it, because I'm just your hired hand, your elected representative. Why did you feel so good? You may think it's self-evident. Ask yourself—what is your answer? Why?

Because you know how much trouble there has been there. You know how these people and their leaders have been at odds. You've read and seen the continuing tensions in the region. And after all the hope of peace in '93 and '94 and '95, the tragic killing of Prime Minister Rabin, the elections, the upheaval, then stalling, and there in the middle of the place where the world's three great religions—Islam, Judaism and Christianity—believe in one God were born—all of a sudden people were able to lay down their mistrust and lay down their hatred and grit their teeth and come together and say we're going to try again to reaffirm our commitment to peace. We're going to try together to live on this little piece of land. We're going to try to find a way to live together so that we, together, fight terrorists, who are the enemies of all of us. We're going to try to find a way to live together so that we don't have to put you down to lift ourselves up. And when something like that happens, we just feel big. It gives us energy. It gives us hope.

You know, I'm Irish. To have played a role in this Irish peace process is a great thing for me. To believe that the bedeviled land of my ancestors could finally be walking away from hundreds of years of absolute madness so that all the Irish writers and poets and musicians of the future will have to find some new subject to sing and write about—*[laughter]*—some new reason that justifies spending all night at the pub with a Guinness. *[Laughter]* You laugh, but it's a great joy. Why? Because in the end, we all know down deep inside that the things that make us

happiest are those things which reaffirm our common humanity.

Now, what's the most troubling event that's happened in America in the last 2 weeks? I would argue that it's the tragic murder of that young man, Mr. Shepard, in Wyoming. You know, I saw his picture on television, and I talked to his parents and his brother. And I thought, that boy could have been my son. And I listened to his friends talk about him, how he always tried to help people and he was always trying to do things for people. And it looks like, pure and simple, someone took him out because he was gay, so they thought, well, he really is not a part of our deal here. But I think he is part of our deal here.

Now, what's all this got to do with this election? Because every fundamental decision in the end is about whether you have a unifying view of America and your own life and the future you want for your children; whether you really believe that there is such a thing as our common humanity and there is a way for us to advance it as citizens. And that has been America's mission from the beginning, since our Founding Fathers declared, when they knew it was not true, in fact, that we were all created equal, and that in order to further our objectives of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness we were going to bind together and try to form a more perfect Union.

Now, they said that and they knew we weren't all equal in fact. And they knew we were a long way from the ideals we wanted. But they knew what we should be doing and the direction in which we should be going. Now, when you strip it all away, that's what's at stake in this election. And because these issues are so big—this is like an election for President in some ways. We have the message, we have the candidates, we have the unifying vision. Don't let the fact that this is a midterm election let the voter turnout be so low that we wind up disappointing ourselves on the day after the election.

So I tell you all, I'm grateful for the money that we have given to Senator Boxer, and she'll spend it well. But you are not off the hook—*[laughter]*—because there are still several days between now and this election.

You look at this crowd here. How many people do you believe that all of you will see who never come to a political event like this between now and Tuesday, November the 3d—tens of thousands? A hundred thousand? All the people you work with, the people you socialize with, the people you worship with, the people you bump into at a coffee shop—how many people will you see?

I'm telling you, we are about the business of defining our country and what it will be like. If you were heartbroken when that young man was killed, if you were elated by the fact that these two people—Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat—were able to reach across this great divide and say, hey, we don't exactly know what's out there, but we're going to jump off this high diving board together—and I might say, they deserve the credit, not me. It was an honor for me, every minute of it. But if you felt that, that means you know that we can't define our future by putting down people who are different from us, and we can't get ahead by pushing people behind. You know that.

You may think this is easy enough for me to say because I have no more elections in me. But I promise you, I believe this—the greatest victories we all win in life are not the victories we win over other people. It's the victories we win for our common humanity.

A day after this election, the great joy of Barbara Boxer's life will not be that she defeated Mr. Fong. He has been a worthy opponent. They have had a good race. The great joy will be that she's been given 6 more years by you to reaffirm our common humanity. And we have ample evidence that that is what our country desperately needs.

So don't you pass a person between now and November 3d—don't pass a one, and Barbara Boxer will go back to Washington.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:58 p.m. in the Peacock Room at the Mark Hopkins Intercontinental Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Mark Buell and his wife, Susie Thompson Buell; former Senator Alan Cranston; gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Gray Davis of California; Art Torres, State Democratic chair; Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel; and

Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

## **Statement on the Student Loan Default Rate**

*October 26, 1998*

When I came into office, there was a student loan default crisis in this Nation. Nearly one out of every four students was failing to pay back his loan.

Today I am proud to announce that we have brought the default rate down below 10 percent, the lowest rate since these data have been collected. The student loan program is now a shining example of Government providing opportunity with accountability.

Some of those failing to pay back their loans were victims of fly-by-night schools that never followed through on their promises. I am proud that over the past 6 years, we have eliminated 1,065 schools from the student loan program, protecting students and taxpayers from fraud and abuse.

Other students had difficulty affording their loan payments, because they were just getting on their feet, or they had decided to take low-paying jobs serving their communities. I am pleased that the reforms for which I fought have given those borrowers a wide variety of options, including paying off their loans as a percentage of their income over time. And because of our economic strategy of reducing the deficit while investing in people's skills, there are jobs for those who finish college, so they can pay off their loans.

Unfortunately, there will always be some who just do not take their responsibilities seriously and then expect taxpayers to cover for them. Fortunately for the taxpayers, this government has expanded the tools that it has to find these defaulters and arrange for payment. That has taught others that a student loan is not a free ride.

This success comes from the hard work of Government. It is a testament to the commitment of our Secretary of Education, to the policies that we have implemented, and to the people who have put them into practice.